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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Military Situation in South Vietnam: The Communists have launched several attacks in widely separated areas of South Vietnam in the past 48 hours.

In Quang Ngai Province, enemy troops in battalion strength attacked South Vietnamese positions five miles from Quang Ngai city on 8 January, killing 14 defenders and wounding 14 others. Enemy losses are not known. In Pleiku Province, Communist elements attacked a US airstrip near Pleiku town with mortar and small arms fire for the third consecutive day. Casualties were light.

In the delta, the Viet Cong launched two company-sized attacks against government troops on 8 January. In one action, the enemy overran a South Vietnamese militia outpost in Kien Hoa Province, killing five defenders. Enemy losses are not known. The Viet Cong also stepped-up pressure against river shipping. They sank a large dredge near My Tho on 9 January and also attacked two South Vietnamese minesweepers and a British tanker nearer to Saigon, before being driven off by armed helicopters. (Map)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: [The Ky government may be planning a major replacement of province chiefs in the delta.]

[Following the recent ouster of the chiefs of Phong Dinh and Kien Giang provinces, Premier Ky has now ordered IV Corps commander General Manh to remove the chiefs of An Giang and Chau Doc provinces,

(continued)

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[If effected, the changes would represent a concerted effort by Ky to replace supporters of former IV Corps commander Quang, who was dismissed last November, in favor of province chiefs who owe their allegiance to the government. The reshuffle might also serve to weaken the position of Defense Minister Co--currently the most prominent southern general in the government--whom Ky is known to dislike.]

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West Germany - NATO: The Kiesinger government is planning to take an active role in the new NATO Nuclear Planning Group.

The US delegation at the North Atlantic Council reports it has received informal indications that the West German delegation is determined to make the planning group the main vehicle for the pursuit of German nuclear interests within the alliance. The Germans are said to have persuaded Bonn to play an active role in the first ministerial-level meeting of the planning group, tentatively scheduled for March.

Bonn has in the past favored a NATO nuclear force co-owned and co-possessed by all the members willing to participate. The government of Chancellor Kiesinger, however, recognizes that there is little prospect of such a development at this time and appears prepared to exploit fully the possibilities the new organization offers for participation in nuclear planning and control.

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France - South Africa: The terms on which France purchases uranium oxide from South Africa may be under renegotiation.

According to the US Embassy in Pretoria, rumors have been circulating for several weeks that an arrangement involving the exchange of French-manufactured military aircraft for nuclear material is in prospect. The embassy believes that a recent speech in Pretoria by a spokesman for the French Atomic Energy Agency, in which he referred to France's continuing attempts to purchase uranium, tends to substantiate the rumors. The embassy also notes in this connection the impending visit to South Africa of the chief of the French aircraft export agency.

France has been purchasing South African uranium oxide under a five-year contract signed in 1964. Thus far Paris has purchased at least 600 tons. The uranium, a by-product of South African gold-mining operations, is being sold to France at a price probably below the cost of exploiting resources in France.

Aircraft have accounted for a major share of South Africa's military purchases from France. These have included Mirage III all-weather fighters, helicopters, and transports.

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OAS: Western Hemisphere members of the British Commonwealth are likely to disagree over the advisability of joining the OAS when they meet later this month.

The newly independent government of Barbados has expressed a desire for early entry into the organization. Trinidad-Tobago also is thinking seriously about joining. On the other hand, Jamaica is inclined to delay a decision, and Canada has shown very little interest in joining. The Canadians reportedly plan to convene the conference to discuss the pros and cons of membership.

Some present members of the OAS doubt that admitting new members would be a good thing. In part, their reluctance is based upon the small size of some of the islands, the differences in colonial experience, and the concept of a Commonwealth bloc in the OAS. Other impediments involve unresolved territorial disputes, such as those between Venezuela and Guyana and between Guatemala and British Honduras.

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NOTES

USSR-Scandinavia: Soviet and Scandinavian officials resume talks in Moscow today on expanding existing overflight agreements for Aeroflot and the Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS). The Soviets are seeking rights to overfly Scandinavia on their North American and Cuban routes, while SAS hopes to obtain a route across Siberia to Japan. The Scandinavians are prepared to accept the Soviet proposals, but have indicated that they would suspend Soviet overflights if the Siberian concession is not granted within two years.

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Somali Republic: Legislation is under way in the Somali parliament to transfer control of the Western-trained 1,500-man mobile police force to the army, which has been equipped and trained by the USSR. The ostensible purpose of this move is to strengthen the army in the event of clashes with Ethiopia over control of French Somaliland. If the transfer goes through, it will eliminate the coup capabilities of the police, seriously weaken the position of its pro-Western chief, and leave the army in a position of unassailable strength.

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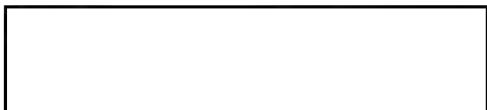
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Israel-Syria: The situation along the Israeli-Syrian frontier is worsening. The exchanges of tank fire during the past two days go a step beyond the recent firing with smaller weapons. Thus far there have been no Israeli fatalities. Should any occur, the Israeli's could mount a reprisal with little or no advance notice. Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol has again warned that Israel would not stay "idle" in the face of renewed "aggression," [and care is being taken to substantiate Israel's case against the Syrians in a note to the UN Security Council.]

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